MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

May-June 2005

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

RESTORATION CENTER OFFERS FISH PASSAGE TRAINING

The Restoration Center's Northeast Regional Office offered fish passage design training. The training covered design criteria for various passage methods and essential data needs for evaluating fish passage design plans. The 3-day training ended with a day in the field evaluating several existing fish passage structures, including one recently modified and one with future plans for improvements. The training provided excellent insight into what is required for both designing passage and evaluating design plans. **(Sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)**

SITE VISITS ESSENTIAL TO PERMIT REVIEW PROCESS

NOAA staff, along with an Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) project manager, conducted site visits at five locations in Maine to determine eelgrass presence in proposed project areas. All projects were for pier construction, three in the Harpswell area, one on Cousins Island, and one on Islesboro. During the project review, eelgrass was identified using the Maine Department of Marine Resources G.I.S. based eelgrass maps from 1993-1997. The maps provide a good basis for conducting a site specific survey. The site visits allow resource agencies and the ACOE to evaluate the full potential for project related impacts and to propose alternatives which avoid or minimize those impacts. **(Sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)**

JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732

MEADOWLANDS INTERAGENCY MITIGATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING (MIMAC)

The group followed up last month's site visit to the EnCap Golf Holdings, LLC., site on Berrys Creek with a discussion of questions and concerns about the permittee's proposal to enhance the wetlands adjacent to their mitigation site for use as a mitigation bank. The applicant was informed of the need to comply with the federal and state guidelines for the establishment, use, and operation of Mitigation Banks. It was the consensus of the MIMAC that the conversion of

the existing *Phragmites* dominated tidal wetlands to a freshwater impoundment was not appropriate due to the need to use mechanical water control structures and the likelihood of increasing the Meadowlands' problem with Canada geese. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS NEWARK BAY MAINTENANCE DREDGING

HCD reviewed a public notice and essential fish habitat (EFH) assessment for the maintenance dredging of the channels in the Port Newark and Port Elizabeth section of the Newark Bay Federal Navigation Channel. The EFH assessment prepared by the ACOE assessed adequately the impacts of the proposed project and HCD was able to concur with their assessment that there would be no more than minimal adverse impacts on EFH. No EFH conservation recommendations were needed. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

DELAWARE ESTUARY SCIENCE CONFERENCE 2005

Habitat staff attended the "Linking Science and Management for the Delaware Estuary" conference on May 10-11, 2005 in Newark, Delaware. The conference brought together scientists, resource managers, and others to help coordinate and chart science needs for the Delaware Estuary. Presentations provided input on scientific issues, data gaps, and recommendations for guiding future science funding through talks, discussions, and poster presentations. Highlights included speakers: Bradley Campbell, Commissioner, NJDEP who spoke of public health issues such as water quality advisories, storm water, and PCBs contamination, and the need to invest in natural resources which have important economic value in order to sustain them; John Hughes, Secretary, DDNREC who spoke about the need to develop uniform fisheries management regulations for PA, NJ, and DE, and to investigate cumulative impacts of all water intake structures with available technology even if there are substantial costs involved; Kathleen Callahan, Acting Regional Administrator, EPA Region 2, who spoke about natural resource stewardship and systems awareness being a moral issue at the community level and that "sustainability" is transitional with an adaptive vision necessary; Jerry Conrad (USCG), who provided an update on the Athos I Oil Spill in the Delaware River; and Donald Welsh, Regional Administrator, EPA Region 3, who shared his experience from the policy perspective and said that for a sustained commitment, the Delaware Estuary Program needs to market itself with a firm identity, and that the federal budget process wants to see measures of efficiency, measurable goals and indicators, and real results.
(anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)

PHILADELPHIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Habitat staff participated in a conference call to review and help plan studies for the Philadelphia Airport Capacity Enhancement Program (CEP) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The purpose of the airport expansion is to alleviate congestion at the airport, which is also affecting other airports throughout the country. Several alternatives are being discussed to alleviate the airport problems. Expansion effects on the Delaware River, the Heinz Wildlife Refuge, I-95, the Philadelphia Sewage Treatment Facility, Fort Mifflin National Historic Site, the Sunoco Tank Farm, the ACOE dredge disposal facility, and the UPS facility need careful consideration.
(anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)

DELAWARE DIVISION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL, DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE - ARTIFICIAL REEF PROGRAM

Habitat staff is reviewing an ACOE public notice for the continued deployment of artificial reef materials at eleven existing artificial reef sites, eight of which are located at various locations along the western portion of the Delaware Bay, and three located in the Atlantic Ocean along the coast of Delaware. In addition, three new sites would be authorized: the Reedy Island site, a Delaware New Jersey inshore site, and a Delaware/New Jersey offshore site. The purpose of the project is described in the public notice: "to manage and rehabilitate marine and estuarine fisheries resources... and to enhance fishing and scuba diving opportunities for the public." The National Marine Fisheries Service has requested that an expanded essential fish habitat assessment be performed for the project pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act which would assess all of the direct, indirect, individual, and cumulative effects of the project. **(anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)**

MILFORD, CT OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460

COOPERATIVE EFFORT UNDERWAY FOR CONTAINED AQUATIC DISPOSAL FACILITIES

NMFS is involved in a cooperative effort with the New England District ACOE and Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP) to develop guidelines for siting and operating contained aquatic disposal sites (CADS). The guidance will be used for dealing with the growing interest in use of the CADS technology for non-federal dredging projects where the sediments are deemed unsuitable for unrestricted openwater disposal. The ACOE has taken the lead in the effort that would establish criteria and provide site guidance for the general public, and reduce the uncertainty revolving around such proposals. The effort will cover site identification, characterization of subbottom geology, resource impacts, and mitigation measures as well as scheduling and operation. **(Michael.Ludwig@NOAA.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

PHRAGMITES CONTROL AND SALT MARSH MANAGEMENT

Saltmarsh management and lessons learned over the last 25 years was the topic of a meeting between CTDEP, the federal resource agencies, and a number of the research community members located in Connecticut. The initial focus was on the recent advances in controlling the invasive form of the common reedgrass (*Phragmites australis*). The technology has evolved to the necessity of controlled spraying as an initial step in a long-term management approach. The nature and volume of the dosage delivery and application of newer herbicidal formulations aerial spraying is a topic that merits reconsideration, as does restrictions on the acreage being treated at any one time at any single location. Much of the issues will be the topic of papers presented this fall at the Estuarine Research Foundation meeting. **(Michael.Ludwig@NOAA.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

NIAGARA POWER PROJECT SEEKS RELICENSING

The New York Power Authority's (NYPA) license to operate hydropower facilities at Niagara Falls will expire in calendar year 2007. NYPA must file a new application to continue operating

these facilities with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in 2005. NYPA recently issued a facsimile transmittal providing electronic links to stakeholder comments posted regarding project effects on public health, safety, and security. While no action is required at this time, Habitat Conservation staff will monitor the application's progress. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

EFH CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED FOR SAILOR'S HAVEN MARINA

Milford Field Office staff completed their review of a recent draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) and essential fish habitat (EFH) assessment from the National Park Service regarding potential plans to rehabilitate an existing marina and ferry dock on Fire Island. Activities considered in the DEA feature maintenance dredging with disposal as backfill or beach placement, bulkhead repair, replacing the ferry dock and light poles, and an expansion in marina capacity. These comments included a series of conservation recommendations provided to avoid and minimize adverse effects to EFH**. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

OXFORD, MD OFFICE, 904 SOUTH MORRIS STREET, OXFORD, MD 21654

MID-CHESAPEAKE BAY ISLAND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION STUDY

NEPA coordination and studies continue on the feasibility of restoring island habitat on James Island and Barren Island through the beneficial use of dredged material. Both islands are located in Dorchester County, along Maryland's Eastern Shore in the middle portion of the Chesapeake Bay. James Island, which currently consists of three eroding island remnants of approximately 100 acres, would be restored to a 2,070-acre size, comprised of 55% wetlands and 45% uplands. Dredge material used in the restoration of James Island will come from maintenance of Approach Channels to Baltimore Harbor and Approach Channels to the C&D Canal within the Chesapeake Bay mainstem. Barren Island, which currently consists of three eroding island remnants of approximately 180 acres, would be provided protection from additional erosion through construction of stone breakwaters and small tidal marsh creation projects using dredge material from maintenance of the Honga River Federal Navigation Project. Barren Island is owned and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a satellite refuge area to the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. The James Island project, which will become one of the primary long term disposal options for the Port of Baltimore, will provide between 78 and 95 million cubic yards of dredge material placement capacity through the year 2025. NOAA Fisheries Service coordination goals include re-shaping and diversifying the perimeter of James Island project to enhance adjacent estuarine waters for fish resources. **(John.Nichols@NOAA.GOV, 410/ 226-5606)**